

REMARKS

Please reconsider the present application in view of the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering the present application and indicating that claims 4, 5, and 20 are allowable.

I. Disposition of Claims

Claims 1, 3-5, 9, 10, 13-16, and 19-38 are currently pending in the present application.

II. Rejection(s) Under 35 U.S.C § 102

Claims 1, 3, 9, 10, 13-16, 19, and 21-38 of the present application were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,041,143 issued to Chui et al. (hereinafter "Chui"). However, for the reasons set forth below, this rejection is improper.


Applicant respectfully notes that the present application is a national phase application of PCT Patent Application No. PCT/IB99/00288 (filed on February 8, 1999), which claims priority of European Patent Application No. 98400367.3, filed on February 16, 1998 (as acknowledged by the Examiner in the Office Action of July 9, 2003). Therefore, the present application has an effective filing date of February 16, 1998, which is prior to Chui's earliest filing date of April 14, 1998. Accordingly, Chui is not prior art to the present application, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places the present application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 11345.021001).

Respectfully submitted,

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